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WEBB COUNTY PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, May 06, 2003

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9-1-1 MEASURE SPELLS RELIEF FOR WEBB COUNTY TAXPAYERS

AUSTIN--A bill approved by the Texas House of Representatives on Tuesday could spell relief for Webb County's general revenue fund.

House Bill 3194 by Rep. Richard Raymond, D-Laredo, would grant Webb County and certain other counties in the state additional flexibility with respect to how 9-1-1 emergency communication fees and surcharges can be spent.

Existing state law restricts the use of applicable 9-1-1 fees and surcharges to 9-1-1 system planning and development. HB 3491 would amend state law to permit the Commission on State Emergency Communications to fund affected counties requests for response component elements such as radio systems, vehicles and personnel, including 9-1-1 operators. Counties currently use local general revenue funds to pay for these expenses.

"We are constantly exploring avenues for reducing the overall burden on our county's general revenue fund," said Webb County Judge Luis Bruni. "This bill will lessen the local burden on taxpayers for funding our 9-1-1 system while at the same time giving us more flexibility to address our specific 9-1-1 system needs."

The bill authorizes the most populous county in each of the 24 regional 9-1-1 planning commissions across the state to use locally collected 9-1-1 fees and surcharges for obtaining and maintaining equipment and personnel necessary to establish and operate a public safety answering point or other related answering points or operations.

“The bill in no way changes Webb County’s status as a member of the 9-1-1 regional planning commission consisting of Webb, Zapata, Starr, and Jim Hogg counties,” Bruni stressed.

“I see this additional spending flexibility as a mechanism for improving not only Webb County’s ability to address its 9-1-1 communication needs, but also the changing needs of our regional member counties as well,” Bruni added.

The bill now heads to the Senate where Senator Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo will sponsor the measure.

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